



## SERVICE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT CHALLENGES - THE CASE OF INDIAN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY SECTOR

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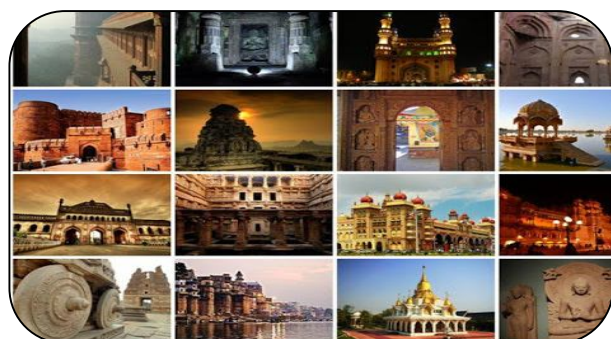
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### ABSTRACT :

This paper examines the issues of service quality improvement relating to Indian tourism & hospitality sector and addresses the challenges. Travel and tourism sector is the largest service sector in India. This sector provides various types of tourism and hospitality services involving heritage and Indian culture. The key purpose of this sector is to develop and promote tourism through maintaining competitiveness of India as the popular tourist destination and improve and expand existing tourism service products. Managing service quality is crucial for tourism sector related organizations. The significance of the quality management issue for tourism related organizations has dramatically increased in recent years due to the highly intensified level of competition in the industry caused by the globalization. Tourism and hospitality sector is a service quality intensive sector; hence delivering the best quality of services needs more intense prioritization and introspective scrutiny. Periodic Assessment of service quality is needed to



augment tourist satisfaction of travelling in culturally rich India.

**KEYWORDS:** Indian Tourism & Hospitality Sector, Service Quality, Improvement, Challenges.

### INTRODUCTION:

Travel and tourism sector is the largest service sector in India. This sector provides various types of tourism and hospitality services involving heritage, cultural, medical, adventure, rural, business and sports tourism. The main objective of this sector is to develop and promote tourism, maintain competitiveness of India as the popular tourist destination and improve and expand existing tourism service products. It aims to ensure employment generation and economic growth through service providing. Service quality is an important aspect of any business. This is necessary for

1.	Consumer Satisfaction
2.	Healthy Competitiveness
3.	Reflective Of Cultural Ethics
4.	Streamlining Nations' Ethos
5.	Consistent growth of Tourism Sector

Tourism and hospitality sector can deliver overall improvement in quality of services including

Transportation services	Airlines, Cruise Ships, Taxi, App Based Cab Service, Tour Guide Management, Tour Operator Management
Hospitality services	Tourist Guide Services, Catering, Accommodation, Hotels, Resorts, Health Resorts And Medical Stay, Home Stay, Lodging Tour Destinations Marketing Management, Tour Products Marketing, Booking, pre tickets booking
Entertainment services	Amusements Parks, Kid Parks, Casinos, Shopping Centers, Malls, Reality Shows, Award Events, Music Concert Venues Opera Theatre Venues , festival packages,

The sector has reiterated the need to raise the levels of service in three levels because each tourist expect good services such as

1. Regional level
2. National level
3. Global level

**The Role of Stake Holders** – The stake holders have a greater role in raising the service quality. They have to initiate good service providing services with regard to environmental management, accommodation facilities management, resource mobilization and management, waste management, drinking water management.

**The Role of Government** - The Ministry of Tourism functions as the nodal agency for the development of tourism in the country. It plays a crucial role in coordinating and supplementing the efforts of the State/Union Territory Governments, catalyzing private investment, strengthening promotional and marketing efforts and in providing trained manpower resources. The functions of the Tourism Ministry in this regard need to focus on development of policies related to enhancing services.

1	Tourism and hospitality service promoting	India receives international tourists all round the year. Domestic travellers are also on the rise. But the services are yet to reach global standards. The tourists often complain about lapses in hospitality services.
2	Incentives providing	All hospitality services can become more rewarding and attractive through incentives. The wage earners in this sector are often working for low wages without insurance and health care benefits. The work hours wages and less attractive career benefits deter young people from taking up jobs in hospitality sector.
3	External Assistance providing	The majority of people who are working in tourism and hospitality sector are unorganized and are seasonal

		wage earners.
4	Manpower Development & management	Policy guidelines regarding providing hospitality service courses, training and capacity building. Higher education sector can support youth with new courses and add on certificate courses in hospitality services. This will help students who wish to take up careers in hospitality sector.
5	Destination Promotion & Marketing	Tourism ministry can consider providing destination related promotional activities such as providing brand ambassadors. They act as destination promoters. Each state in India is culturally rich and distinctive. Brand ambassadors such as sports celebrities, cine stars, theatre artists, can be invited to promote destination and support in marketing tourism services. These activities will support in enhancing tourism and hospitality services.
6	Investment attraction and crowd funding	Tourism ministry attracts investment for developing tourism destinations. But the focus of investment can be diverted towards training and capacity building.

**Managing Quality is Crucial** - Managing quality is crucially important for tourism organizations along with other types of businesses. The significance of the quality management issue for tourism organizations has dramatically increased in recent years due to the highly intensified level of competition in the industry caused by the globalization, low barriers for entering into the industry and a range of other factors. The department of tourism and culture has several initiatives towards playing a vital role in cultural heritage conservation.

Several strategies designed by the tourism department have shown that developing strategies for heritage conservation has helped youth to gain;

1. Heritage education,
2. Heritage awareness programs for public,
3. Heritage walks, Heritage exhibitions,

4. Cultural shows including heritage painting, essay, debates, talks shows,
5. Student awareness activities such as study tours , project writing, heritage site visits, report writing , assignment etc
6. Youth involvement in heritage event management , cultural exhibitions etc
7. Inclusive tourism practices, such as promotion of emerging areas of tourism such as accessible tourism for disabled and differently able persons, children tourism, herbal tourism, food tourism, experiential tourism, etc.

### Need for High Level Service Quality:

Tourism and hospitality sector needs high level service quality as it is directly associated with superior practices in hospitality, tourism and leisure time activities across the globe. There is profound competition in this sector, hence, service quality is also needs to be more advanced and of the foremost quality. This has lead to streamlining of strategies to improve quality in service rather than price. There is a need to

- ✓ Define hospitality services ,
- ✓ Appraise hospitality services,
- ✓ Analyze available hospitality services
- ✓ Improve hospitality services,
- ✓ Control and manage hospitality services,

The tourism and hospitality sector often handicapped by the failure to change the existing pattern of services. Because service quality can improve only when it is properly defined and evaluated. The role of all stake holders becomes top priority. It will include;

1. **Role of Citizens** -These studies have to be linked with building awareness among public. The need for broader participation of community can be initiated through awareness sessions. There is a need for proper documentation of the cultural heritage conservation processes because these processes h go a long way in creating community participation.
2. **Role of Fund Gathering Initiatives** - Public can be involved in raising funds for cultural heritage conservation
3. **Role of Institutional Leadership** - There is a need to design a strong institutional policy environment towards heritage management

4. **Role of Local Governments** -there is a need to identify clear vision about forming local policies through local governments. Local government has to integrate cultural heritage conservation into a broader perspective with community participation. Any success of cultural heritage conservation needs the support of all local citizens. As the local citizens feel proud to be a part of the cultural heritage conservation
5. **Role of Media** - cultural heritage conservation needs to become a part of the responsible media such as radio television There is a need to promote responsible tourism as strategy to involve tourists in cultural heritage conservation
6. **Role of Public-Private-Partnerships Initiatives** - The need to frame policies involving public private partnerships is very significant in cultural heritage conservation
7. **Role of Research & Promotion**- There is a need to initiate studies and research programs to combine cultural heritage conservation with sustainable strategies.
8. **Role of Stable Policy Designing**- There is a need to create policies with sustainable goals and link them with cultural heritage conservation.
9. **Role of Tourism Development**- The place which is a part of the cultural heritage conservation is directly linked with city's cultural and historical attributes. It affects the city culture through enhancement of tourism opportunities, this supports local economy and local trade becomes expanded. The department of tourism and culture plays a vital role in cultural heritage conservation. Several studies have shown that developing strategies for heritage conservation such as education awareness programs for public.

**Considerations-**

There is a need for addressing policy gaps rampant in hospitality sector.

1	<b>Poor Gender Mainstreaming</b>	Hospitality service sector employs higher number of women but there are certain hospitality services which women can manage with dexterity. But there is very poor gender mainstreaming. Women involvement in hospitality related work as laborers, front office workers in hotels and restaurants, receptionists in lodges, tour operators, cab driver services, etc are still male dominated.
2	<b>Poor Identification Of Training Needs</b>	Service quality improving involves training and capacity building. Without proper training service quality cannot reach expected levels.
3	<b>Poor management of Wage Inequities</b>	Even though the sector has majority of women laborers, it failed in understanding the women labor issues in Labor Market. There is a high risk of recruitment and retention of women labor. The risk of poor wages and poor career benefits do not attract youth and women. Besides, the issues of sexual exploitation, gender discrimination, social distancing always deter from choosing hospitality sector.
4	<b>Poor Awareness About Human Rights</b>	The hospitality sector always depends on good service providing mechanism which naturally relate with human rights awareness and human rights promotion. All roads of good hospitality need to relate with human rights awareness and promotion.
5	<b>Poor Support From NGOs</b>	The priority towards augmenting tourism services can be augmented through attracting support from NGOs and self help groups.

Ministry of Tourism and hospitality related sectors find tourism related service providing activities more multifaceted than ever. The rise in

international tourists and rise in domestic tourists is pressurizing the tourism sector towards framing perfect guidelines for service providing. There is a need for

1. Intense prioritization,
2. Introspective scrutiny,
3. Periodic assessment of service quality,
4. Redefining the access to services,
5. Increasing avenues for collaborative practices,
6. Augmenting partnerships,
7. Enhancing opportunities for service user involvement,
8. Delivering the value for money at right time,
9. Delivering awareness of hospitality services,
10. Implementation of technology
11. Reputation management
12. Environment friendly hospitality practices
13. Personalizing customer experiences

**CONCLUSION:**

Thus, Tourism and hospitality sector is a service quality intensive sector, hence delivering the best quality of services needs more intense prioritization and introspective scrutiny. Periodic Assessment of service quality is needed to augment tourist satisfaction of travelling in culturally rich India. Besides, India is ethically value loaded country with high regards for service at all levels of hospitality. But the need to redefining the access to services, increasing avenues for collaborative practices, augmenting partnerships, enhancing opportunities for service user involvement, delivering the value for money at right time and place etc needs to be prioritized before thinking of service quality in tourism and hospitality sector. Delivering hospitality awareness through consistent training and capacity building will support endeavors of service quality improvement.

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